

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 06479 201731Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 NEA-10 AID-20 OPIC-12

CU-04 EB-11 DRC-01 /212 W

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R 201655Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3730

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USINT ALGIERS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 6479

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO TUNIS

1. FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER MICHEL JOBERT WAS IN TUNIS FROM NOV 15 TO 17 ON OFFICIAL VISIT AS PART OF ANNUAL FRANCO-TUNISIAN CONSULTATIONS. VISIT WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN LOCAL NEWS MEDIA AND WAS CHARACTERIZED BY EFFUSIVE TUNISIAN EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION FOR FRANCE. BOURGUIBA AND PM NOUIRA RECEIVED JOBERT AND FOREIGN MINISTER MASMOUDI GAVE LUNCHEON IN HONR OF JOBERT IN WHICH HE DELIVERED RATHER LONG AND FLORID TOAST EXPRESSING THESE SENTIMENTS.

2. JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED ON NOV 17 AT CONCLUSION OF VISIT FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON WORK OF "JOINT TUNISO-FRENCH MINISTERIAL HIGH COMMISSION". COMMUNIQUE NOTED THAT DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE IN ATMOSPHERE OF "CONFIDENCE AND PROFOUND FRIENDSHIP". COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT TUNISIA WELCOMED POSITION OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AND THAT IT WAS THE VIEW OF BOTH FRANCE AND TUNISIA THAT EUROPE "SHOULD PLAY A ROLE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN BRINGING ABOUT A DURABLE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 06479 201731Z

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST". COMMUNIQUE ALSO SAID THAT THERE WAS

A "GREAT IDENTITY OF VIEWS" BETWEEN TWO PARTIES ON PROPER WAYS TO BRING ABOUT SUCH A PEACE. TWO PARTIES PROMISED TO KEEP IN "CLOSE TOUCH" IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO SEARCH FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

3. REGARDING BILATERAL RELATIONS, COMMUNIQUE UNDERLINED CLOSE ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL TIES PRESENTLY EXISTING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ALTHOUGH NO SPECIFIC DETAILS WERE GIVEN. IT NOTED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BEGIN IN PARIS IN EARLY DECEMBER REGARDING TUNISIA'S NEW FOUR-YEAR PLAN AND FRANCE'S FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PLAN. PROBLEM OF FRENCH PRIVATE HOLDINGS IN TUNISIA AND THEIR REPATRIATION TO BE SUBJECT SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS IN NEAR FUTURE, WHILE PROBLEMS OF TUNISIANS WORKING IN FRANCE TO BE DISCUSSED AT NEXT MEETING OF JOINT COMMISSION. COMMUNIQUE STRESSED THAT FRANCE WOULD BE "SUPPORTING TUNISIAN INTERESTS" IN NEGOTIATIONS PRESENTLY UNDERWAY BETWEEN FRANCE AND COMMON MARKET. TRADE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, PRIVATE INVESTMENT, AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES ALSO DISCUSSED, ACCORDING COMMUNIQUE.

4. ON DEPARTURE, JOBERT ASSURED PRESS THAT THERE WERE NO DIFFICULT BILATERAL ISSUES BETWEEN FRANCE AND TUNISIA. HE NOTED THAT JOINT MEETING WOULD BE HELD IN DECEMBER TO CONSIDER FRENCH INVESTMENT IN TUNISIA WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN AT CENTER OF DISCUSSIONS OF HIGH COMMISSION.

5. COMMENT: EVER SINCE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S STATE VISIT TO FRANCE IN SUMMER OF 1972, TUNISIAN-FRENCH RELATIONS -- ONCE SO STORMY -- HAVE BEEN AT THE PEAK OF CORDIALITY. A YEAR AGO BOURGUIBA TOLD ME THAT HE ATTACHED THE MOST IMPORTANCE TO RELATIONS WITH FRANCE AND THE U.S. QUITE OBVIOUSLY, THE TUNISIANS REGARDED THE JOBERT VISIT AS SYMBOLIC OF THEIR NEWLY-DEVELOPED CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR FORMER EUROPEAN NEMESIS.

6. WE ARE NOT YET CERTAIN OF DETAILS OF ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF THE TALKS BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT TUNISIANS ARE SATISFIED WITH CURRENT RATE OF FRENCH ASSISTANCE OF AROUND 220 MILLION FRANCS A YEAR. TUNISIANS APPARENTLY WERE CRITICAL OF RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF NEW FRENCH INVESTMENT IN

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 06479 201731Z

TUNISIA. JOBERT ON DEPARTURE SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY POINTED OUT THAT LEVEL OF SUCH INVESTMENT IS SUBJECT TO PUBLIC CONFIDENCE DESPITE AGREEMENT TO PROTECT INVESTMENTS CONCLUDED IN JUNE 1972. END COMMENT.

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